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# HISTORY OF THE



## OLD LIBERTY BELL

—BY—

WELLESLEY BRADSHAW.



HISTORY  
AND  
LEGENDS  
OF THE  
OLD LIBERTY BELL  
IN  
INDEPENDENCE HALL,  
AT  
PHILADELPHIA.  
*TO WHICH IS ADDED THAT OF THE NEW BELL.*

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*Alexander, Marcus Wesley*  
BY WELLESLEY BRADSHAW. *second.*

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# HISTORY AND LEGENDS

OF THE

# OLD LIBERTY BELL.

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Of all the interesting and historical relics connected with the early existence of our country, the most revered is the Old Liberty Bell, now deposited in Independence Hall at Philadelphia.

The writer of this has stood for hours at a time, closely watching the countenances of the throngs of visitors who came to gaze at the mementoes of the Revolution. They are all collected in the two rooms, respectively situated to the east and west of the main entrance to the building. The eastern apartment is the one where the first Colonial Congress assembled to debate and decide the question of our national freedom, where Jefferson and Franklin and their illustrious compeers weighed and measured the tremendous struggle which was about to be inaugurated. In this room are collected the identical chairs, tables and other pieces of furniture which were used there in 1776. Around the walls are suspended portraits of the statesmen and soldiers who took part in the Revolution. Upon the south side stands a large fire-proof safe, in which is deposited the original Declaration of Independence, and also the silver inkstand used at the time of the signing. In

the opposite apartment are collected large numbers of highly interesting mementoes of our early history, forming a rich museum. Colonel Frank M. Etting has donated several years of indefatigable labor to the project, and has been nobly assisted by a large number of public-spirited ladies and gentlemen. When visitors go to the Hall they keenly enjoy the feast prepared for them there, and contemplate with varied feelings the curiosities.

But it is when they suddenly stand before the Old Liberty Bell, in its voiceless eloquence, that their eyes fill with tears, that their hearts tremble with the emotions, as it were, of a whole century. Then before them rise from the midst of the past, like a vision, Lexington, Bunker Hill, Saratoga, Yorktown, the Constitution and Guierreire, and the hundred other combats of our fathers, by which they won for us, their sons, the heritage of liberty. We have seen strong-nerved men unable to conceal the manifestations of their feelings; while ladies would give way entirely and weep. Instantly, no matter how gaily groups might be laughing and talking, every face would become solemn, as the old Bell came to view. Voices would be pitched in a lower key, and hats would be instinctively removed. A kind of sacred awe at once would inspire each beholder, until he or she recovered from the first effect of the Bell.

Then would follow various comments upon its size, its weight, its supposed tone, how far it could have been heard before it was cracked, and these remarks would generally be concluded with the words:

“Oh, how I would love to hear it ring!”

There is no doubt that the Old Liberty Bell is looked upon as the most sacred and beloved relic of all those deposited within the walls of Independence Hall.

It has, therefore, occurred to the author of these pages that a history of this old bell, and also the many legends connected with it, would be most acceptable to the people, especially to those who have never looked upon it.

About the year 1743, the inhabitants of Philadelphia began to feel that their city “Hall” was worthy of a large and grand bell, and accordingly one was ordered to be imported. In those early times American mechanic arts were in their infancy, and in consequence, nearly everything requiring any skill or machinery to manufacture was of necessity imported from the mother country.

So, after the preliminary lawful steps were taken by the municipal authorities, the order for the bell was sent over to England. In due time it arrived and was tested. But almost at the first stroke it broke in half, for the reason that the proportion of the two metals composing it was wrong, which made it too brittle, and, therefore, caused it to fracture as soon as it was struck.



This was a sad mishap, and for a time it seemed as though the project would fail, and the Hall go without a bell. But at this juncture, Isaac Norris, Esq., who was Speaker of the Colonial Assembly, took the matter in hand. He was a gentleman of great mechanical as well as literary abilities, and being a friend of two citizens, named Pass and Stow, he spoke upon the subject to them. Now they owned a little foundry near the Vats on Third street, or rather in the fields, near Old York Road, and were enterprising men.

"I don't see, Friend Stow, why thee and thy partner can't melt this bell up, and by thy skill give us a bell, and show the mother country we can make our own wares. At least thee shall have the opportunity to make the effort if thee will. • Now what does thee say?"

Mr. Stow replied, as he grasped Isaac's hand:

"We will try, and I thank thee, friend Norris, for thy confidence. Thee shall have thy bell."

"There is one condition which I have to make, friend Stow," resumed Norris, "when thee casts the new bell I wish thee to put this verse of Scripture upon it:

'Proclaim liberty th. oughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof.'"

The condition was immediately acceded to, and through the influence of Norris, the firm of Pass & Stone received the order for the work. This was promptly and faithfully executed and the new bell stood the severest tests to which it was subjected.

There was the greatest exultation throughout the country at this grand success. In a letter written to a friend by Mr. Norris, he wrote:

"Pass & Stow have made a good bell, which pleases me much, that we should first venture upon, and succeed in, the greatest bell, for aught I know, in English America—surpassing, too, the imported one which was too high and brittle—the weight is 2,083 pounds."

This bell was the first to ring out the Declaration of Independence on the *eighth* day of July, 1776.

We have conversed with many very old people about the facts, and their recollections of hearing in their youth persons who were then old, speak of the matter. There is much division about it. That the bell was *not officially* rung on the Fourth of July, seems to be certain. And there are some iconoclastic venerables who assert that it was not rung even on the eighth, which was the day on which the Declaration was first read to the people in the square by Captain Hopkins. But there can be no doubt that it *was* rung at that time, and it is more than likely that it was rung on July Fourth, though the other bells in the city were not. After the Revolution it did good service until the occasion of the visit of the Marquis de La Fayette, when it received a flaw while ring-

ing a welcome to him. It was still used for sometime subsequently, however—the position of the hammer and clapper being altered—until one night, while an alarm of fire was being struck, it finally cracked completely to the crown, and thereupon its old-time, far-resounding voice was gone forever.

Then it was taken down and placed upon a pedestal in the east chamber of the Hall, where, until the beginning of the present year (1876), it remained, silent, yet eloquent. Then it was removed to the rotunda, and from thence to the west chamber, where it is now suspended from its original oaken beam frame.

### THE LEGEND OF THE BLUE-EYED BOY.

George Lippard, the somewhat eccentric author, formed an association of "choice friends," as he was wont to call them, for the purpose of meeting at stated intervals in the "sacred chamber" of Independence Hall, and keeping alive reminiscences of the Revolutionary period.

It was during one of these gatherings that Lippard read to the "friends" the legend of the Blue-Eyed Boy. The following month it appeared in print, and ever since that it has been accepted as an historical fact by the great masses of the people. Even a popular historian has introduced the incident into his work, without taking the trouble to contradict it. The only reason he gave therefor was that the occurrence would have been a very appropriate and beautiful one, and it ought to have been true anyhow.

The Legend is this: On the morning of July 4th 1776, it was told the old bell ringer that the Colonies were to be declared free and independent on that day, by the representatives of the people in Congress assembled. Now the old man had a little grandson, a beautiful boy, with fair, long hair and extraordinary, blue eyes. He was a bright, intelligent lad, the pet of everybody. On that morning the delegates met as usual in the Hall, and according to the instruction of his grandfather, the boy stayed in the chamber eagerly attentive to every word that was spoken. Meanwhile the grand father stood in the belfry with the rope in his hands, ready for the signal from the grandson. Time went on until the old bell ringer became impatient, and began to be doubtful whether any conclusion would be arrived at. At last, however, the clerk rose, and in obedience to the order of the president, announced the result "that these Colonies be declared free and independent."

Like a flash the little blue-eyed boy ran out of the building to the middle of the road, and looking up at the bell ringer, clapped his hands and cried out at the top of his voice:

"Ring! ring! grandpap, ring!"

Instantly the grandfather seizing the rope in both hands, rang with all his might and main. Indeed so violently did he ring that the bell finally cracked.

### THE OLD BELL THROWN INTO THE RIVER.

In the year 1777, when it became evident that our troops would be utterly unable to stay the advance of the English army, it was decided to take the Liberty Bell from its tower at Independence Hall, and conceal it in a safe place so as to prevent its being captured. History and Tradition give this account of that momentous event:

"Every courier coming in brought the news that there was no stopping the British soldiers. Then it was seen that the valuable books and papers and records must be taken away with all haste to some spot where they might be free and safe from seizure. Accordingly steps were taken to consummate this plan, and they were removed. But there were other things just as valuable. And among these the Bell at the Hall. The Federals had made a great time over this bell at the Declaration on July fourth and eighth, which made it an object of particular and malevolent spite to the Tories.

"We knew that they had conveyed this feeling to the English troops, because word was sent into the city that the latter, as soon as they got possession of the place, would melt it down into grape shot, and would fire it from their cannons through our houses.

"It was now resolved to carry it away from the Hall and hide it, so that the threat could not be made good. Apparently this was an easy matter, but in reality it was exceedingly difficult: for we did not know who to trust; and to have one single Tory get along with the party in charge of the adventure, would only have given us the chagrin of seeing the bell captured after all our trouble. So a few of us got together at the dwelling of Captain Abner Thompson, a true patriot, and a man of unusual courage, determination and good judgment. He was called Captain because he had been in the English army.

"All told there were ten men of this band, and, meeting at the Captain's house, we came to an understanding as to our course of procedure. It was this first we selected the mouth of Pegg's Run,\* that is

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\*Pegg's Run was a stream of water whose course was where Willow street is now.

where the stream emptied into the Delaware river, as the best place in which to hide the bell. The next day we were to get a stout platform-cart ready, with two yoke of oxen. Tackling was also to be in readiness, and as soon as it fell dark, we were all to meet among the trees on the west side of the Hall. Once together, then we were to make our way into the building, or rather into the tower,\*\* where the bell was swung.

"After lowering it to the earth, we were then to put it on the platform, goad the oxen to their full speed, and so convey it to the bank of the creek, where we had a raft ready to receive it.

"From there we were to push out in deep water, tumble our charge overboard, and mark the spot where it was sunk, and then retire to our several homes.

"Fortunately the night was dark and stormy, the equinoctials having set in for the Autumn.

"Providence seemed graciously to smile upon our efforts, and without the slightest accident or mishap, we met at the appointed rendezvous. We were all much excited by suspense, as was quite natural under the trying circumstances, but we controlled our nerves and made them obedient to our wills.

"Captain Thompson had, with the suggestions and hints of some of the rest of our party, laid out a plan of operation so thorough and complete in every detail, that nothing could possibly go astray. And in order that no mistake nor negligence might mar any portion thereof, we each and all bound ourselves by our words of honor to obey the Captain in the minutest particular, and not to do a single act on our own judgments.

"When, therefore, we were gathered beneath the trees aforesaid, each man was made aware of the exact part he was intended to perform."

"Is everything right and ready?" asked the Captain in a whisper.

"Each man replied in a like tone of voice."

"One right and ready!"

"Two right and ready!"

"Three right and ready!"

"This was the answer from all of the ten adventurers, who used numbers instead of names."

"Advance, steady!"

"In an instant every man, crouching low, and dragging along the ropes and tools, moved towards the Hall, like shadows, making but very little noise indeed. When about half way over, two quick jerks on the rope

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\*\*The bell tower then was different from what it now is.



by the Captain warned us that a stranger was at hand, and we all dropped into the grass and lay flat.

"Two men came by, and passed sufficiently close for Thompson to touch them. They were talking earnestly, and we recognized one of them as Doctor Bedloe. He was a hot and bitter King George man, and had he known what we were about the alarm would have been quickly given.

"Each moment we expected a signal from the leader to seize the doctor and hold him prisoner till the affair was over. We were quite eager to do so; but as the intruder and the man with him were evidently unaware of our proximity, we allowed them to pass unscathed. We were assured of this from their conversation, which related to the condition and symptoms of a sick lady the doctor was being taken to visit.

"When their footsteps and voices had died out, Captain Thompson gave the advance again, and in a few minutes more we were inside the tower, and set to work like beavers to get the precious bell safely down. First we wrapped and muffled it securely, and then adjusted the tackle. The utmost care was necessary to prevent any mischief happening by which the bell might sustain injury. We all worked like Trojans, and in a few hours the bell was lowered in safety to the ground-floor.

"This done, the next part of the venture was to get the bell upon the platform. First, two men were detailed to examine the approaches to the building to see that no interloper should by accident discover us. Then when all was reported clear, we hurried the platform out from among the trees where we had concealed it, and backing it to the door of the tower, threw a rope over it with a double pulley, and in a very short space drew the bell up. The rain making the planks slippery, just as though they had been greased, caused the huge and weighty mass to slide upon the frame work with great celerity and ease.

"The oxen were quickly hitched to the wagon. Tackle and tools, and all the odds and ends by which we could possibly be traced, were carefully gathered up and laid upon the truck, which was then heaped over with bundles of straw, which we had brought for the purpose. We did not leave until everything was cleared away, and then, at a word from the Captain, we took up our line of march. Every step of the lanes and bye-ways to be used had been noted and gone over the day before in person by Captain Thompson, and drawing his cutlass with the full intention of killing any enemy whom we should meet, that brave man took the lead. We went eastward under some chestnut trees till we came to the bridge across the Dock Creek, beyond the Hall of the Carpenter's Company. [This must have been along Chestnut street to a point some where close to but north of where the old Bulletin Building now stands, on Third street.] Thence we went toward the tan-yards, cutting across



the country and using roads and the ways not usually taken by travellers.

"It rained very heavily, but that was quite friendly to our project, for it kept within doors persons who otherwise might have been out and fallen in with us. The rain served another purpose admirably—it washed out before daylight came all the tracks we made, so that no one could trace us how we came to the Hall, nor how we left, nor whither we went.

"Upon arriving at the bank of the Run we found the raft away from the shore some distance, owing to the rise of the tide and the falling of the rain.

"Four men stripped, and swimming out to it, loosed the fastening and towed it to a spot which was convenient.

"Now we experienced more trouble to get the bell upon the raft than any other part of our adventure. It would slip about, and several times we had nearly let it fall into the mud. This would have been fatal to our enterprise. At last Captain Thompson settled the question by hitching the oxen to the raft and dragging it bodily upon the shelving beach. The bell was easily and safely deposited upon it, great care being used to get it immediately upon the centre. This precaution was to prevent it tipping over when afloat. As soon as it was properly secured, the oxen were driven into the water and tugged the raft back with them.

"The reflection or a sort of a magnetic refulgence in the clouds gave us plenty enough of light for our purpose, and we had no necessity for using our lanterns. We steered down the run until we reached its mouth and came to a point on two triangulated lines with an old oak tree that stood on the land jet at the north side. We were here caught in a swirl of the tide of the Delaware river and driven off in a few moments."

"Quick! men, quick!" said Captain Thompson, "over with her, or we'll get too far up along the shore."

"The tide had us even then, and we knew the peril, so we all sprang forward with more quickness than good judgment. The result was that, though we accomplished our Captain's orders, we not only upset the bell into the water, but ourselves also. We got a real good sousing, but no other detriment, as we were all accustomed to swimming. When we scrambled upon the raft again, we made our way back to shore on the west bank of the Delaware. There we landed, and taking the raft in tow, pulled it round to a point opposite where our oxen and wagon were. Then all jumping on, we made across the run, gathered up our ropes, and so forth, and got to our respective homes without further delay. By the time that daylight arrived not a trace of our night's work could be

discovered by the shrewdest search officer of King George's Custom House.

"Of course there was a terrible hue and cry, and much hub-bub raised the next day, when it was hinted abroad among the inhabitants of the city that the bell had been taken from the Independence Hall. For awhile it was a matter of speculation who had done it. But the secrecy observed plainly proved that it was the work of Federals, for had the Tories done it, or had the British done it, there would have been the wildest exultation over the affair.

"Captain Thompson was an attendant at Christ Church, and as that Church had a very fine chime of bells, he suggested to a few of the vestrymen to take them from the steeple and conceal them so as to prevent their falling into the hands of the British army. They thought the suggestion a good one, and the whole matter being entrusted to him, the same persons who concealed the Independence Hall Bell, assembled at his summons, and carried away the bells of Christ Church. After the evacuation they were all restored to their respective places, amid the enthusiastic plaudits of the people, who turned out universally to see the pageant.

Never again were they disturbed, and at the conclusion of the Revolution, the Old Liberty Bell and Christ Church chimes rang out a merry peal for the victory of our fathers—that victory which gave us our heritage of Republican Liberty. To-day these bells of Christ Church ring chimes of friendly welcome to all nations, and to none more friendly than to old England.

## THE NEW LIBERTY BELL.

Some twelve years ago Henry Seybert, Esq., of Philadelphia, conceived the idea to have founded a new bell, which might occupy the place of the Old Liberty Bell, and was first to be rung when peace should be declared.

With much perseverance and personal exertion he gave shape and direction to his plan, enlisting many of the most distinguished persons in the country in the project.

But, despite his most earnest efforts, it did not receive a sufficient support from the general public, and it, therefore fell into abeyance.

Only into abeyance, however, for at the approach of the Centennial he renewed his proposition. This time, casting aside the former idea of co-operation with contributors, he formally proposed to City Councils to assume the whole expense, not only of the bell, but also of a clock of commensurate power and quality—both to be of American workmanship.

This proposition, which was made on April 15th, 1873, was accepted, and the contract for the bell was awarded to Meneely & Kimberly, the well-known bell founders of Troy, New York, while the clock was contracted for with the Seth Thomas Clock Company, of Thomaston, Connecticut, whose time-pieces have become so celebrated for their perfection.

The clock, which the makers claim to be the finest in the country, is and will continue under the supervision of Wm. E. Harpur, Esq.

The size, weight, proportions, and inscriptions of the bell are as follows, and were obtained personally from Mr. Meneely, the senior member of the firm of Meneely & Kimberly. We may here mention the fact that the bell is two thousand pounds heavier than the *Great Bell* of St. Paul's, in London.

## WEIGHT AND MEASUREMENT.

Weight of Bell	-	-	-	-	-	-	13,000 pounds.
Weight of the clock hammer	-	-	-	-	-	-	300 "
Weight of bell clapper	-	-	-	-	-	-	300 "
Circumference of bell at mouth	-	-	-	-	-	-	23 ft. 6 in
Diameter	"	"	"	"	-	-	7 ft. 3 in.
Height	"	"	-	-	-	-	7 ft
Thickness of metal in bell	-	-	-	-	-	-	7 in.

## COMPOSITION.

New ingot tin	- - - - -	22 parts
New ingot copper, From the Atlantic mines of Lake Superior.	78	"
Total	- - - - -	100 "

## INSCRIPTIONS.

Encircling the crown of the Bell is the text:

*Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth, Peace, Good Will Toward Men.*—Luke, Chapter ii., Verse 14.

Encircling the mouth of the Bell is the same text as upon the old Bell, viz:

*Proclaim Liberty Throughout all the Land, unto all the Inhabitants thereof.*—Leviticus, Chapter xxv., Verse 10.

(FRONT.)

PRESENTED TO THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA,

July 4th, 1876,

FOR THE BELFRY OF INDEPENDENCE HALL,

BY A CITIZEN.

MENEELY & KIMBERLY, FOUNDERS, TROY, N. Y.

(OPPOSITE SIDE.)

1876.



A band of chased, or embossed work, about three inches wide, passes around the bell immediately above the "sound bow," and at equal distances upon this band are cast thirty-eight burnished stars, typical of the States now composing the Union. This is the most pleasing ornament on the bell, and gives it really an imposing appearance, the more impressive when the eye of the beholder ranges up to the thirteen smaller stars in the United States' coat of arms near the crown of the bell.

### THE CASTING.

For some time previous to the casting of the New Liberty Bell, the founders received innumerable applications for the privilege of being present on the interesting occasion. This event took place in May, and though it was at the hour of midnight a large number of spectators was present, including many distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

The huge mass, after being run off into the mould, was allowed to remain in the pit ten days in order to anneal properly, after which it was taken out, scoured and burnished. It was, as soon as finished, placed aboard a propeller and brought to Philadelphia, where it arrived Monday, June 12, causing quite a sensation by its magnificent proportions and great beauty.

Most suggestive and replete with poetry is the fact, that, in the metal of which this bell is composed, were run one hundred pounds each from four bronze field guns, which were furnished for the purpose by the War Department at Washington.

Two of these guns served at the battle of Saratoga in 1777, one on the American side, the other on that of the British. The other two pieces were arrayed against one another at the conflict of Gettysburg in our late war.

How touching, how sublime are the thoughts and impulses that rise within us, as we hear the voice of the noble bell, pealing forth its peans of peace and friendship to all the nations we have gathered round us to share our Centennial feast. And doubly so do these emotions become when we reflect that from the bell's mouth come the voices of those once grim, and hostile guns, chanting a quartette of universal peace.

God grant that during the new century this bell may continue to be not only the New Bell of Liberty, but also of Peace





# The Voice of the Old Bell.

## SONG AND CHORUS.

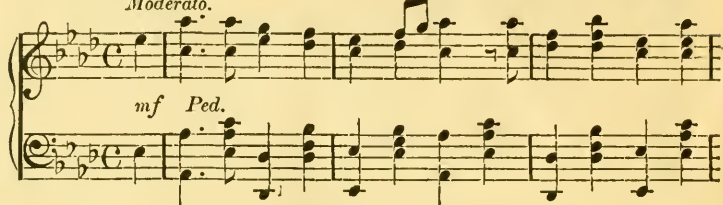
Words by WELLESLEY BRADSHAW.

Music by J. S. THOMPSON.

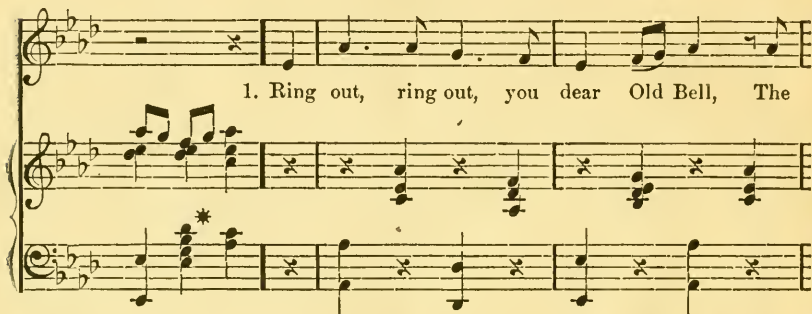
*Moderato.*

Piano  
or  
Organ.

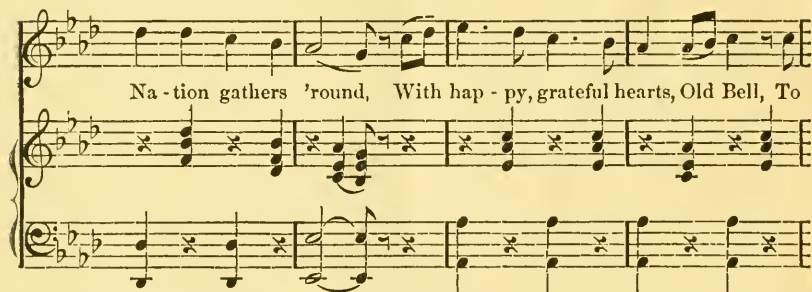
*mf Ped.*



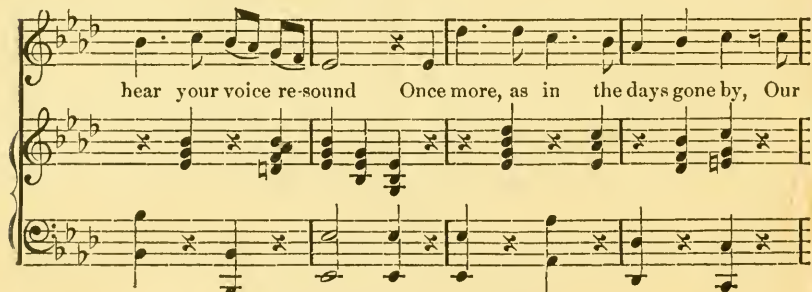
1. Ring out, ring out, you dear Old Bell, The



Na - tion gathers 'round, With hap - py, grateful hearts, Old Bell, To



hear your voice re-sound Once more, as in the days gone by, Our



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# THE VOICE OF THE OLD BELL.

THE MOST POPULAR CENTENNIAL SONG OUT.

---

WORDS BY WELLESLEY BRADSHAW.

MUSIC BY JULIA S. THOMPSON.

---

Ring out, ring out, you dear old Bell,  
The nation gathers 'round,  
With happy, grateful hearts, old Bell,  
To hear your voice resound  
Once more, as in the days gone by,  
When our sires, brave and true,  
Taught us, their sons, how heroes die  
For Freedom rung by you.

CHORUS.—Ring out, &c.

For Freedom rung by you, old Bell,  
Whose iron tongue called forth  
The Minute Men from hill and dell,  
Throughout both South and North.  
So, now, old Bell, from East to West,  
From Florida to Maine,  
Raise your loud voice (of all the best)  
To welcome Peace again!

CHORUS.—Ring out, &c.

To welcome Peace again, old Bell,  
Palmetto State and Pine  
Will join your chorus, proud old Bell,  
As in the Auld Lang Syne!  
Then send your voice to other lands,  
To tell them o'er the sea,  
We'll welcome them with outstretch'd hands,  
To share our Liberty!

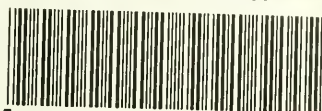
CHORUS.—Ring out, &c.

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The Music of this popular song, with a splendid cover in colors, showing the only really correct picture of the old Liberty Bell, is for sale, in English and German, at WM. H. BONER & CO.'S MUSIC STORE, 1102 Chestnut St., Phila.

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